

San Juan County and Navajo Nation Ramp Up Efforts to Fix Roads Problem

San Juan County Commission vows to renew efforts to press the Federal Government to adequately fund school route roads in Navajo Nation

Monticello, UT ([PRWEB](#)) December 17, 2015 -- [San Juan County](#) Commission is strategizing fresh efforts to restore the only federally funded program (Indian School Bus Routes Maintenance Program) to improve the Navajo Nation's inadequate school bus routes, most of which are neglected dirt roads. Though the U.S. Congress on December 4th again underserved Navajo students by excluding the provision for the school bus routes in the next federal transportation funding bill, San Juan County Commission is still determined to solve the problem and allocate funds so children don't miss school.*

For the past two decades, San Juan County has been the first and only county in the whole country to step into the boots of the federal government to provide transportation and other services to the tribal community. Previously, San Juan County received \$500,000 a year to fund Navajo roads, but now only receives \$90,000.* Since 2005, San Juan County has spent \$11,056,628 of its own funds on Navajo school bus routes. But that is not all, the County also provides other services to the tribal community including healthcare, education, public safety and historical preservation.

Last August, the San Juan County Commission initiated a historic meeting and joined forces with Utah Navajo Chapter officials to secure Governor Herbert's help in the restoration of the Indian School Bus Routes Maintenance Program. As a result, the Governor sent a letter to the U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee to be included in the next federal transportation law.

“The state of Utah, the Navajo Nation, and local county officials are doing what we can to address transportation needs with limited resources,” the Governor stated in the letter.

“I applaud current efforts by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Navajo Nation and local counties to streamline the environmental review process for roads on tribal lands by securing a categorical exclusion for placement of gravel on these roads. This action will optimize transportation funding by maximizing the investment of limited dollars in actual roadway improvement.”

258 of the 627 miles of road within the Utah section of the Navajo Nation are school bus routes. 87 of those bus route miles are dirt road that on the best of days can make the school trip a two hour ordeal, while on the worst of days can make it impossible. Just to upgrade the 87 miles to gravel is estimated to cost \$18 million. Because of the lack of funds, last year, students within the Navajo Utah strip missed approximately six days of school.

“Navajo students have the same constitutional right to get to school as all other students in Utah. These rights can't be a reality without the building and maintenance of safe roads,” said San Juan County Commissioner Rebecca Benally. “We are continually committed to solving these issues for the people of San Juan. We look forward to working with Governor Herbert and President Begaye, taking this issue to Congress again in January 2016.”

About San Juan County:

The San Juan County is the largest county in the state of Utah. Forty-seven percent of the people living in San Juan County are Native American. San Juan County is known for its stunning red rock and majestic arches.



Home to Native American ruins and close to Lake Powell, San Juan County's many attractions capture the attention of tourists from all over the world.

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*<http://www.sltrib.com/home/3317611-155/san-juan-county-navajo-nation-push>

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